

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 140402
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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MASS, US, SO

SUBJECT: PRESS REPORT OF U.S. MILITARY SURVEY MISSION TO
SOMALIA

REF: STATE 135528

1. FOLLOWING FOR POSTS' INFORMATION IS TEXT OF FRONT
PAGE ARTICLE IN JUNE 2 WASHINGTON POST BY DON OBERDORFER
REPORTING U.S. INTENTION TO SEND MILITARY SURVEY TEAM
TO SOMALIA, AND PRESS GUIDANCE PROVIDED TO DEPARTMENT
SPOKESMAN ON WHICH POSTS SHOULD DRAW IN RESPONDING TO ANY
LOCAL QUERIES ON THIS SUBJECT.

2. WASHINGTON POST ARTICLE:
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PAGE 02 STATE 140402

LEAD: U.S. REVIVES PLAN TO SELL DEFENSIVE ARMS TO SOMALIA
TEXT: THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION, AFTER A HIATUS OF NINE
MONTHS, HAS DECIDED TO SEND A MILITARY MISSION TO SOMALIA
AS THE FIRST STEP TOWARD THE SUPPLY OF ABOUT DOLS. 15
MILLION IN "DEFENSIVE" ARMS TO THAT COUNTRY.

THE ADMINISTRATION DECISION, WHICH HAS BEEN COMMUNICATED

TO CONGRESS AND THE SOMALI GOVERNMENT, FOLLOWS TIGHTLY
WORDED ASSURANCES FROM PRESIDENT SIAD BARRE THAT THE
WEAPONS WILL NOT BE USED AGAINST ANY OTHER COUNTRY BUT
ONLY FOR INTERNAL SECURITY OR SELF-DEFENSE OF SOMALIA'S
EXISTING TERRITORIAL BORDERS.

THE WEAPONS SUPPLY PROGRAM, STILL IN AN EARLY STAGE, WOULD
BE A MODEST U.S. COUNTERWEIGHT TO THE 17,000 CUBAN TROOPS
AND EXTENSIVE SOVIET WEAPONRY PROVIDED TO NEIGHBORING
ETHIOPIA, WHICH HAS BEEN SOMALIA'S FOE IN A WAR OVER
THE OGADEN REGION.

IN AN EFFORT TO COUNTER SOVIET BACKING OF ETHIOPIA AND
INDUCE SOMALIA TO BE "OUR FRIEND," PRESIDENT CARTER
DECIDED IN PRINCIPLE LAST JULY 15 TO SUPPLY WEAPONS TO
SOMALIA. U.S. OFFICIALS WERE SHOCKED WHEN ONLY EIGHT DAYS
LATER SOMALI REGULAR FORCES INVADED THE OGADEN AND A FULL-
SCALE WAR WITH ETHIOPIA ERUPTED.

LAST AUG. 9, THE STATE DEPARTMENT TOLD A SOMALI MILITARY
AID MISSION IN A MEETING HERE THAT THE ARMS COULD NOT
BE SUPPLIED WHILE THE OGADEN WAR CONTINUED. LATER THE
UNITED STATES DEMANDED ASSURANCES THAT ANY WEAPONS IT
SUPPLIES WILL NOT BE USED TO ATTACK ACROSS RECOGNIZED
TERRITORIAL BORDERS.

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PAGE 03 STATE 140402

THE "HANDS-OFF" POLICY OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION--
WHICH ALSO REFUSED TO PERMIT U.S. ALLIES TO TRANSFER AMER-
ICAN ARMS TO SOMALIA--LEFT THAT COUNTRY ON THE LOSING END
OF THE MILITARY TEST OF STRENGTH WITH SOVIET AND CUBAN
BACKED ETHIOPIA.

SOME AMERICAN OFFICIALS,INCLUDING PRESIDENTIAL NATIONAL
SECURITY AFFAIRS ADVISER ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI, AND A
NUMBER OF FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND
EUROPE WERE DISSATISFIED WITH THE SEEMING U.S.IMPOTENCE,
PARTICULARY WHEN SOVIET-CUBAN AID TO ETHIOPIA REACHED
DRAMATIC PROPORTIONS. BUT THE MAJORITY VIEW IN THE
ADMINISTRATION--AND THE VIEW ADOPTED BY CARTER--WAS THAT
THE UNITED STATES MUST NOT CONDONE NOR ASSIST AN INVASION
BY AN AFRICAN NATION ACROSS A NEIGHBOR'S BORDER.

THE ASSURANCES THAT HAVE BEEN PROVIDED BY SOMALIA IN
RECENT WEEKS WERE DESCRIBED BY U.S. OFFICIALS AS QUITE
EXPLICIT. THE OFFICIALS ADDED THAT, BEFORE PROCEEDING,
THE UNITED STATES WILL MAKE CERTAIN THROUGH VIGILANT
INQUIRY THAT THE SOMALIS MEAN WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT THE
STRICTLY DEFENSIVE USE OF THE U.S. ARMS. HAVING BEEN

EMBARRASSED BEFORE BY SOMALIA, SOME SENIOR AMERICAN OFFICIALS ARE KNOWN TO BE SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE NATION'S INTENTIONS.

THE FIRST STEP IN ESTABLISHING A MILITARY SUPPLY

RELATIONSHIP IS THE DISPATCH OF A PENTAGON SURVEY TEAM. SOMALIA WAS INFORMED IN RECENT DAYS OF THE U.S. WILLINGNESS TO SEND A TEAM, AND ASKED TO APPROVE THE CUSTOMARY AGREEMENT ABOUT THE TEAM'S ACTIVITIES.

AN ON-THE-SPOT PENTAGON SURVEY COULD TAKE PLACE LATER THIS MONTH IF SOMALIA GIVES QUICK APPROVAL. THEN A PRESIDENTIAL DETERMINATION MUST BE MADE TO QUALIFY THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 STATE 140402

COUNTRY FOR ARMS SALES. THE FINAL STEPS ARE THE SIGNING OF CONTRACTS FOR SPECIFIC WEAPONS AND THEIR SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS FOR REVIEW. THE U.S. WEAPONS FOR SOMALIA ARE EXPECTED TO BE FINANCED BY SAUDI ARABIA.

SHOULD THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION FAIL TO SUPPLY THE ARMS DESPITE THE SOMALI ASSURANCES, THE PRESSURES FOR A SWING BY THAT NATION BACK TO A SOVIET MILITARY RELATIONSHIP PROBABLY WOULD BE INCREASED. MOST OF SOMALIA'S CURRENT WEAPONRY WAS PROVIDED BY THE SOVIET UNION IN THE PAST DECADE, BEFORE RUSSIA "SWITCHED SIDES" AND TOOK UP AN ALLIANCE WITH ETHIOPIA, THE FORMER U.S. MILITARY PARTNER IN THE AREA. END TEXT.

3. PRESS GUIDANCE:

Q. CAN YOU CONFIRM THE OBERDORFER STORY IN TODAY'S POST THAT THE US HAS DECIDED TO SEND A MILITARY SURVEY MISSION TO SOMALIA, AND THAT THE SOMALIS HAVE GIVEN ASSURANCES THAT ANY WEAPONS WE SUPPLY THEM WILL ONLY BE USED TO DEFEND THEIR EXISTING TERRITORY?

A. I CAN CONFIRM THAT, IN THE COURSE OF INTENSIVE EXCHANGES OVER THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS, THE SOMALI GOVERNMENT HAS PROVIDED US ASSURANCES THAT IT WILL NOT USE FORCE AGAINST ANY OTHER COUNTRY EXCEPT IN DEFENSE OF ITS OWN INTERNATIONALLY-RECOGNIZED TERRITORY. THIS WAS IN RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT CARTER'S REQUEST THAT, AS A CONDITION FOR EXPANDED US AID, THE SOMALI GOVERNMENT UNDERTAKE TO RESPECT ITS NEIGHBORS' BORDERS AND TERRITORY IN THE FUTURE. WITH REGARD TO A MILITARY SURVEY MISSION, IT IS COMMON PRACTICE FOR US TO HAVE THE RESULTS OF A MILITARY SURVEY BEFORE PROVIDING ARMS TO ANOTHER COUNTRY. THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 05 STATE 140402

DETAILS OF SUCH A SURVEY MISSION ARE STILL BEING DISCUSSED WITH THE SOMALI GOVERNMENT, AND WE WILL NOT BE IN A POSITION TO COMMENT ON THE SUPPLY OF ANY SPECIFIC ITEMS PENDING THE VISIT OF THE TEAM AND ITS REPORT. ANY ACTUAL MILITARY SALES TO SOMALIA WOULD REQUIRE A PRIOR PRESIDENTIAL DETERMINATION MAKING SOMALIA ELIGIBLE FOR SUCH SALES.

Q. IS IT INTENDED THAT SAUDI ARABIA WILL FINANCE ANY

SOMALI PURCHASES OF ARMS FROM THE US (AS STATED IN THE POST ARTICLE)?

A. SINCE NO SPECIFIC SUPPLY AGREEMENTS HAVE BEEN REACHED, ANY DISCUSSION OF FINANCING AT THIS STAGE WOULD BE PRE-MATURE AND COULD ONLY BE SPECULATIVE. IN ANY CASE IT IS UP TO THE PURCHASER TO ARRANGE FINANCING.

Q. HAVE WE CONSULTED WITH CONGRESS ON THIS?

A. WE HAVE KEPT THE APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES INFORMED OF DEVELOPMENTS IN OUR RELATIONS WITH SOMALIA. WE HAVE NOT MADE ANY DECISIONS OR TAKEN ANY ACTIONS AS YET ON MILITARY SUPPLY WHICH WOULD INVOLVE FORMAL CONGRESSIONAL CONSULTATIONS.
CHRISTOPHER

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